

# **Connecticut Veterinary Medical Association**

## **Testimony on Senate Bill 397**

March 12, 2010

The Connecticut Veterinary Medical Association, which represents 95% of Connecticut licensed veterinarians, notes Senate Bill 397 with interest. The bill would direct the Commissioner of the Connecticut Department of Agriculture to assess the adequacy of existing regulations, which prevent interstate movement of sick puppies into Connecticut. Further, the bill specifically uses the term "puppy mill(s)", a term which while qualitatively descriptive of a substandard commercial canine breeding operation, has no legal or accepted definition.

We question the scope and limitations of the bills language in the following areas:

1. Its focus on puppies, rather than on any dog imported into the state from any source.
2. Its lack of specificity as to what health conditions are covered by the word "sick."
3. Its lack of a definition for what exactly constitutes a "puppy mill", how a given out-of-state facility will be determined to be one and what recourse such a facility might have if wrongly designated as such.

We feel that while the goals of SB 397 as presently written are good, the bill does not go far enough in ensuring animal health and consumer protection. Each week, individuals and organizations associated with the pet "rescue" movement, quietly ship dogs of all ages into Connecticut for purchase and adoption by citizens, without any state regulatory oversight. These transfers occur in commuter parking lots, fairs and other out-of-the-way locations, scheduled and planned to avoid attention from Connecticut authorities. The animals enter our state without in-state medical evaluation or any oversight by the Connecticut Department of Agriculture. Indeed, an entire, unregulated pet transport industry exists which arranges the movement of these animals into Connecticut for a shared fee. Animals imported in this way regularly arrive with unexpected diseases and deformities, regularly expose our native animals to illnesses and put a financial burden on the citizen adopters, who are uninformed of pre-existing animal health issues and related expenses. This entire practice poses health risks to the animals and to the public and also makes adoption of Connecticut source animals less likely, as Connecticut is flooded with out-of-state originated animals.

SB 397 would better serve to ensure the health of imported animals and the public if it was broadened to include dogs of any age, from any source, without the focus on just puppies or so-called "puppy mills." The reality of the importation of diseased animals into Connecticut is far more nuanced than you may have previously been led to believe, and therefore ensuring the importation of healthy animals and the fair treatment of Connecticut animal owners, goes beyond issues with just pet stores, puppies and puppy mills. The "rescue" trade should also be included. Such inclusion will go a long way to closing the existing regulatory loopholes which allows shipment of unhealthy animals into Connecticut without proper health oversight. Thank you.

Sincerely,

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